

VBH BOT FYI Legal

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New laws brewing on campaign signs
By Marie Wilson | Daily Herald Staff
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Campaign signs usually have a defined life span in the suburbs. Seven to ten days after an election, many municipal codes require the signs to be taken down.

But a state law passed in the summer prohibits municipalities next year from limiting when political campaign signs can be displayed on residential property.

"When your neighbors do have political signs out there - and some of them are quite large - that will be their right," said Lombard trustee Dana Moreau.

Lombard village board members agreed Thursday night to amend the village code removing time restrictions for political signs on residential property in order to comply with the state law. But they did so reluctantly.

"I don't think any of us on the board are doing back flips in support of this new state statute," said Village President William Mueller.

But where the state law didn't go, Lombard did. The village board also passed an amendment decreasing the size for campaign signs on residential property from 12 to 9 square feet.

Municipalities across the suburbs including Libertyville and Roselle are considering amending their political sign regulations as well.

"We know a lot of municipalities are changing their local ordinances that used to place those time restrictions since the state law supersedes them," said Ed Yohnka, spokesman for the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois. "The state didn't go as far as we'd like in not barring size or square footage restrictions."

Wheaton already enforces size restrictions for campaign signs, said Jim Kozik, Wheaton's director of planning.

The city allows signs as large as 16 square feet on residential property, and up to 32 square feet on nonresidential property, he said.

"Four by four is a pretty common, big campaign sign," Kozik said. "It's not like we're asking people to spend an extravagant amount of money to comply with our standards."

Libertyville's village attorney is studying whether the village's code will need changes to comply with the state law, said John Spoden, director of community development.

Under the current code, campaign signs must be removed five days after an election, but signs displaying political messages can remain posted indefinitely, Spoden said. There are no size restrictions for either type of sign.

"We want to see (campaign signs) removed or else they sit around forever," Spoden said.

Despite the new state law, communities such as Aurora and Arlington Heights are not planning any changes to their municipal codes.

Aurora's code does not include any time restrictions for campaign signs, said

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city spokesman Dan Ferrelli. And Arlington Heights Assistant Village Attorney Robin Ward she reviewed the state law and believed the village's codes already matched it.

But all temporary signs, including political signs, must be removed seven days after the event they publicize. Ward said.

In the meantime, municipal law prevails in the Nov. 2 election; the state law becomes effective Jan. 1.

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